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The social dimensions of the student condition are defined by seven societal factors. These factors include: (1) the segmentation of radicalism on campuses, which encourages, yet controls, change-rate and change-direction; (2) the intellectual campus climate, which enhances intellectual dissatisfaction and the probability of change; (3) the psychoanalytic frame of reference, which encourages ideological, ethical development; (4) the identification of upwardly mobile students in terms of social class, parental effects, and peer group influences; (5) the rigidifying occupational opportunity structure after graduation; (6) the contest mobility mode, which makes intellectual values secondary to practical achievement in school and life; and (7) the changing role of the undergraduate experience and the interactions of student and the larger society. (WR)

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THE CONTEMPORARY COLLEGE STUDENT

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Woodstock College, Woodstock,
Maryland; January 27, 1967

Introduction

It would be easy to succumb to the temptation to describe the contemporary college student in demographic terms. The dimensions of such a description, however, are familiar to all of us. Included would be such measures as the growing proportion of young people 16 through 24 who are in schools of some kind, the growing numbers of older persons who find school enrollment to be of interest and of use to them, and the changing socio-economic structure of this school attending population. We could identify the changing fashions in academic objectives, and the geographic factors which tell us that by 1970 over three-fourths of all college students will be attending college under commuting conditions. All of these factors are part of the necessary description of the contemporary college student.

Tonight I want to look at a series of characteristics derived from the interaction of the contemporary college and its students with the larger society to see if there emerges a description not of the students themselves but of the tasks which we face in seeking to serve the needs of this generation and of society. Let us look in order at seven societal factors which impinge upon students and, taken together, define the social dimensions of the student condition.

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I. SEGMENTATION OF RADICALISM

Higher education in the United States once had an observable geographic characteristic: colleges were located in small towns and rural areas where they were carefully screened from contact with the general population and from the tumult and anti-intellectual influences characteristic of urban populations. Such was the case of many organizations with the purpose of isolating novitiates from any unscheduled contacts except with those officers of the organization directly involved in their training and supervision. Under such conditions attitude and value formation was thought to be controlled. Educated persons could thus be expected to act as a conservative force when they entered the larger society, conservative in the sense that their reactions to the problems they encountered would stem from a consistent and predictable attitudinal base.

As professional schools were developed separating the training of practitioners from the practice itself (e.g. from reading for the law) a curious ambivalence was evidenced. Sometimes these professional schools were located physically on the isolated campuses of colleges, at other times they were located in urban settings and affiliated with a college in a loose and long-distance federation. The relationship with a college was felt to be necessary for reasons of library, disinterested work and study, and dependence upon the basic departments and courses of the college, as well as for reasons

of status and prestige. To be located in a more readily controlled environment was thought to contribute to purity of thought and conduct and a lesser likelihood of introducing threatening change into the practice of the profession. On the other hand, there was a strong feeling that a professional school needed to be located where the action is, where people and materials are available for demonstration and laboratory purposes and for the apprentice practicing of the professional mode. Then, too, there were the practitioners themselves whose interest and assistance not only enhanced the reputation of the school but added to the strength of the instructional program. Today we find colleges most characteristically placed in an urban setting and the development of the great professional schools is largely associated with urban settings. When the original location of the host institution failed to develop urban characteristics we find that the professional schools have simply removed themselves or have changed affiliations.

As colleges have become larger and more urban we find them to have a marked propensity for change. The association of these professional schools with colleges, then, has the effect, perhaps unanticipated consciously, of maximizing the propensity to change inherent in the research and teaching functions and at the same time setting it apart from the practice of the profession. Thus a teacher in a professional field with a marked personal predeliction for new knowledge and perspective finds his interest enhanced. At the same time he is set apart from

the commercial operations of the profession and his effect upon the rate of change of the profession itself is thus controlled.

True, the clients or students of the teacher enter the profession and contribute to change but only under circumstances in which they work with, and usually under the direction of, older professionals who by their influence and reactions control the rate of change. The teachers themselves may enter professional practice and introduce change at a somewhat faster rate but even they will be affected by the resistance to rapid change of the culture of the practitioner.

What our society has done is to segmentalize its radical dimension by transforming a once conservative institution into a hospice for change-oriented personnel and movements. (1) This does not imply that the majority impact of the educational institution is a radical one. The college is, however, in this technological and interdependent age, the generator and modifier of much of the impulse to change in our society. Its essentially conservative nature serves to control the rate of change and to blunt its radical thrust. (2) This is evident in the contemporary relationship between the professional school and the college. The effects of size and urban location add to the receptiveness to change and increase the opportunity which individuals have to be sensitive to both the need for and the possibilities of change.

If, over against this situation, we consider the changing geographic origins of students we find the readiness to accept and

to initiate change heightened by the backgrounds and experiences of students. Thus we can identify one major dimension of the college scene today to be this characteristic propensity and hospitality to the concept of change but circumscribed by the expectation that change will occur in orderly and predictable ways.

II. THE INTELLECTUAL CLIMATE

But change is only part of the story. The college is characterized by an intellectual mode, both ideally and as compared with other institutions of society. Gusfield (3) contrasted this with what he termed the professional and the organizational climates of the college. An intellectual climate is one in which the systematic pursuit of ideas can take place without thought of application, result, or consequence. A form of "high play", this is sometimes called, and some observers, like David Riesman, have pointed to the "playfulness characteristic of intellectuals" as the primary reason that practical men of affairs are uncomfortable with and distrustful of them.

When scholars talk about the values they wish to see furthered as a result of this intellectual play they often put foremost the habit of intellectual dissatisfaction. (4) Representatives of the establishment in any social institution, be it commerce, church, or government, become acutely uncomfortable when instructional practices in an intellectual climate result in the comparative rather than the normative use of reference groups or of authority figures or offices. For example, look

at the discomfort produced by the studies of Allport (5), Ross (6), and others which demonstrated that the 17-23 year age group is at the least religious period of their lives and that a critical and even rejecting stance toward organized religion is therefore to be expected and not resisted. Consider also the adolescent habit of denigrating others as a means of building up their own readiness to enter into full responsibility in a competitive world. These are all facets of intellectual dissatisfaction and therefore an expected and accepted dimension of the contemporary student world.

The propensity to change of the campus climate and the habit of intellectual dissatisfaction combine to create implicit environmental pressures upon all members of the campus community but particularly upon students.

III. THE PSYCHOANALYTIC FRAME OF REFERENCE

This environmental pressure comes at a time when students are consolidating the dimensions of personality, completing stages which have been delayed, and preparing themselves for adult independence. Much of the writing about students is from the psychoanalytic view of the armchair reasoning variety, derived from idiosyncratic experience and evaluation rather than from experiment or from controlled investigations. Nonetheless, it is stimulating and provocative.

Among the most seminal of these writers has been Erik H. Erikson. His descriptions of the developmental tasks of adolescence and their relationships to the larger society have upset a great many of the supposed truths of personality growth.

He has concentrated on the common developmental tasks of adolescence. The description of the identity search against a backdrop of role diffusion, of the capacity for intimacy as opposed to isolation, and the adolescent search for ideology have done much to help us understand the current manifestations of adolescent behavior.

Consider, for example, the often noted quality of much current adolescent rebellion as having an explicit moral quality. This is what Erikson has to say in an essay entitled "The Golden Rule in the Light of New Insight";

> "...between the development in childhood of man's moral proclivity and that of his ethical powers in adulthood, adolescence intervenes when he perceives the universal good in ideological terms....The adolescent learns to anticipate the future in a coherent way, to perceive ideas and to assent to ideals, to take - in short - an ideological position for which the younger child is cognitively not prepared. In adolescence, then, an ethical view is approximated, but it remains susceptible to an alternation of impulsive judgment and odd rationalization. It is, then, as true for adolescence as it is for childhood, that man's way stations to maturity can become fixed, can become premature end stations, or stations for future regression." (7)

This is instructive to counselors but Erikson in the same essay terms such a description useful only as a suggestion of the order to developmental process. It is good for all of us to be reminded that all students are individuals yet each is a prisoner of the common human condition.

IV. WHO ARE THE UPWARDLY MOBILE?

The American dream is based upon a faith in hard work. We believe that one should take advantage of an open opportunity structure. We thus make an established value

of upward mobility. But all college students are not aspirants for upward status and those who are carry this value in differential amounts. What accounts for the differentials?

There are a number of lines of investigation which have been followed. One focuses upon social class. These investigators note that social class origins confer different value structures and that these are important influences on education and occupation aspirations among adolescents. Middle class aspirants, they observe, tend to have higher aspirations than lower class persons and they tend to attribute this to a greater faith in the American dream on the part of the middle class. What is the empirical evidence?

Eckland (8) analyzed national patterns relating social class and graduation from college. Among high rank high school graduates he found that social class could not be used to predict graduation from college. Among lower rank high school graduates, however, he found that social class was a more powerful predictor of college graduation than were variations in intelligence or economic variables. He was thus led to the conclusion that social class differences will be of increasing importance in determining who graduates from among the college entrants of the next few decades.

Sewell (9) studied Wisconsin high school seniors of the year 1957 and found that, for girls, going to college was directly related both to intelligence and socio-economic status. For boys, however, he found that as community size increased

the percentage of boys with college plans increased. He reviewed the literature and learned that for Germany, Austria, and for seven different states in the U.S.A. rural and small-town migrants to cities held lower status occupations than competing urban-born residents. Upon reviewing his own Wisconsin data he observed that this size-of-community differential was greatest for boys from high status families even when intelligence was rigidly controlled. (10)

There was a period during which it could be demonstrated that Catholic men were somewhat less committed to an achievement ethos and were less likely to make a commitment to an academic career. These claims, if they were ever true, have been effectively dissipated during this decade by the work of Bressler and Westoff (11) and Greeley (12).

A second line of investigation focuses upon the effects of parents upon the aspirations of young people. Elder (13) reviewed data from the United States, Great Britain, West Germany, Italy, and Mexico and found that in each of these countries educational attainment was negatively related to the degree of perceived parental dominance in adolescence. High educational attainment was most prevalent among persons who reported democratic relations with their parents and equalitarian relations between father and mother. Bennett and Gist (14) reported that among Kansas City students that maternal influence was stronger and more effective in influencing vocational and educational aspirations at lower class levels, regardless of race.

Ellis and Lane (15) found upward mobility to be related not as much to the dissatisfaction of the father with his own lot as it is to the mother's reaction to the family's status in life. Students from lower strata report the most non-familial influences on their educational plans, girls somewhat more often than boys. Teachers were reported most often as the source of such influence.

A third focus has been on the influence of the peer group on upward mobility aspirations. The usual suggestion, in the absence of hard data, is that lower class students acquire middle class values from their peers, a process termed anticipatory socialization. The evidence is somewhat more complex. McDill and Coleman (16) have reported on the status complex in secondary school. Status gains appear to go to students who have positive plans to attend college, as opposed to negative plans, but have a negative orientation toward academic achievement. Alexander and Compbell (17) reported that at a given level of parental education a male high school senior has aspirations for higher education if his best friend does, rather than does not, plan to go to college.

Boyle (18) reports from a review of other studies and the analysis of some Canadian data that the population composition of a high school affects the aspirations of its students, more in large high schools than in small ones. With further reference to metropolitan high schools, Boyle finds that peer group influences help explain the differences in aspiration levels unaccounted for by differences in scholastic ability and discounts the effects of social-class values.

We do not have any empirical studies, to my knowledge, of the operation of these same factors in college settings. Until we have evidence to the contrary we can with considerable confidence extrapolate these findings on peer group influences to the undergraduate college setting.

At this point, in summary, we have no definitive patterns of the source of motivation for upward social mobility. Social class, parental relationships, and peer group effects are all pertinent. What this would argue is that we need to take into account each of these dimensions as we work with college students to increase their upward aspirations. The peer group effects call for attention to the campus climate through an activities program and that kind of interaction which provides desirable role models for students. The social class effects demand that we understand the origins of a particular student body and consider these factors in our programs of advising and counseling. The parental relationships factor mandates a family relations program rather than assumes a complete separation of late adolescent from parent interaction which we, at present, appear to do implicitly.

The upwardly mobile student, responsive to his academic environment and accomplishing satisfactorily his tasks of personality development, encounters a society moving counter to his directions. The resultant frustration frequently becomes directed against an undefined "establishment.: Is society moving to close off opportunity to the upwardly mobile?

V. THE RIGIDIFYING OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE

Folger and Name (19) have analyzed the relationship between jobs and educational attainment through recent census data. They report that changes in the occupational structure are less important than changes in the educational levels of workers within occupations. The relationship between educational attainment and occupation has declined in strength during the past two decades and appears to be continuing. We are at the point that gross level of educational attainment is a necessary but no longer a sufficient condition for occupational entry.

Such a situation has great implications for college young people. They appear to be aware of this even without the knowledge of figures and learned studies. How do you get on the merry-go-round was the query put by 90% of the responding students at one state university when asked what their principal question about the world was. Much of the comment about the new pressures to get into graduate school reflects directly this concern about a rapidly rigidifying opportunity structure in our society.

VI. THE CONTEST MOBILITY MODE

In one of the most impressive articles in recent years, Turner (20) contrasted two types of mobility which could characterize a society. He contrasted sponsored mobility with contest mobility. Sponsored mobility aims to make the best use of the talents in a society by sorting them into their proper places. The English educational system, which places individuals on a certain educational tract according to their scores on eleventh year tests, would represent this. Those selected or

sponsored on the going-to-college tract have an assured place in the society (the elite) and their educational experiences are intended to inculcate those values which the elite in the society wish to maximize. Contest mobility, on the other hand, aims to give elite status to those who earn it according to the attributes which that particular society determines to reward. The American higher educational system is a part of such a contest mobility system.

American students run an annual contest. At the beginning of each school year they are presumably equal. By the end of the year which is the duration of the contest they are sorted along a single continuum of achievement. The content of this achievement was described by Parsons as "relative excellence in living up to the expectations of the teacher as an agent of the adult society." (21) At the beginning of the second year they are again presumably equal and they run another contest with a similar grading or sorting along the continuum at the end of the year. The pattern is repeated throughout the school career of the student. As in school, so in life. There is no final arrival at elite status. We are not accustomed to according greatness to a fellow citizen until his death, when the contest is over. Until then he is an equal contestant and is to be accorded no deference beyond recognition of past success. There is no guarantee of future status until it is taken in an open contest.

The principal feature of American criticism of their schools

is for failure to motivate students properly. This criticism, says Turner, "appears to be an intellectual application of the folk idea that people should win their station in society by personal enterprise." We tend not to place a value on the content of education as such but rather upon the usefulness of an education as a means of getting ahead in life. There remains more than a little of the folk suspicion of an educated man as one who may have gotten ahead without really earning his position.

And isn't our college situation operated like a true contest? Students must meet competitively set standards, undergo a series of trials each semester, and only a few qualify for the final prize of graduation. And beyond this lies the further test in the world of practical affairs without which one's practical merit is as yet uncertain. Such an education has merit for training an individual to function in an unordered world and perhaps our Yankee reputation for getting things done may derive in large part from this.

Of course, there are counter tendencies in American society. Status achievement through climbing the corporation or bureaucratic hierarchies and the decline of individual entrepreneurship are among such signs. So, too, is the fact that a college education is required as a minimum qualification for entry into more and more professions. To this Turner offers

> "The prospect of a surplus of college-educated persons in relation to jobs requiring college education may tend to restore the contest situation at a higher level, and the further possibility that completion of higher education may be more determined by motivational factors than by capacity suggests that the contest pattern continues within the school." (22)

[illegible] has continued his studies with investigations into the nature of ambition in our society. From his later writing comes the clear evidence that ambition must be measured in quite different terms for men and for women. Educational and occupational ambitions are substantially related to material ambitions for men. For women, however, their educational and career ambitions bear little relationship to their material expectations.(23)

VII. THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE

When the student spent his undergraduate years apart from the world in a relatively isolated and insulated environment he could usefully be studied as a developing organism passing through stages such as those described by Erikson and by Sanford (24). Today he is situated most commonly in an urban setting, wholly or partially responsible for his own financial support, and whether he wills it or not he is a part of the larger society and both affected by and with a responsibility to help determine its characteristics and policies. We have come to regard his culture as important to his educational progress and have developed increasingly sophisticated tools for measuring and understanding that culture.

Becker (24) defines student culture as

> "a set of understandings shared by students and a set of actions congruent with those understandings - a shared way of looking at one's world and acting in it."

The dimensions of this student culture are responses to pressing and chronic problems. The new student finds cultural guidelines ready for his use. Witness, for example, the solutions which

graduate students have evolved to satisfy the imposed requirements of foreign language competency. Each graduate school has developed rational solutions, collective in nature, to the imposition of this requirement. Thus the problems produce a collective response and collective solutions are found which are rational, that is they are consciously developed and deliberately evolved.

The dimensions of this student culture result from the interactions of students and the larger society. Where once they may have been regarded as particular to the group of students populating a given campus they are today a part of a ubiquitous student culture which spreads to all campuses. Where once the student could cut himself off from the movements and activities running through the larger society he is now inevitably, though often unwillingly, a part of that larger society, subject to its influences and in turn influencing it. To understand students, to describe them and to predict their behaviors, one must look to these interactions as much as to the individual student and the particular campus.

A SUMMARY STATEMENT

The dimensions we have identified as relevant include the following:

1. Society has tended to make the college campus the locus of the impulse to change in society. It has segmentalized radicalism as a means of controlling change but also as an assurance that the process of change will be continuous and relevant to its needs.

2. The climate of the campus tends to maximize the intellectual values, chief among which is a habit of intellectual dissatisfaction. This is often called a playfulness characteristic and operates to enhance the probability of change.

3. The student condition has as one of its tasks the development of ideology, described by Erikson as the assent to ideals. This is a necessary stage in the development of adult ethical powers.

4. The American Dream is of upward social mobility. Empirical evidence establishes that three factors principally condition which students will act upon this social value: social class of origin, the nature of parental relationships, and the influence of the peer group. Graduation from college, a necessary condition for upward mobility, appears to be determined in considerable part by these social factors which are beyond the ability of the individual to control, and operate in spite of his level of intellectual ability.

5. If the student does graduate from college he faces the reality of a rapidly rigidifying opportunity structure which runs counter to the prevailing mythology.

6. The dominant theme in American education is that of a contest in which intellectual values are secondary to practical achievement.

7. The student is a part of the larger society and responsive to it, no longer under a moratorium from the obligations of

Perhaps the questions this summary implies form the most apt description of the contemporary American college student.

- Is the formation of ideology accomplished effectively in an atmosphere of intellectual dissatisfaction?
- Is the goal of upward social mobility an acceptable one in view of the evidence of a closing opportunity structure?
- Does segmentalizing the impulse to change suggest that a change in the intellectual climate is possible for the contemporary scholar?
- Is the contest mobility mode consistent with the fact that mobility tends to be governed by social factors beyond the ability of an individual to influence effectively?
- Does the fact that the student is no longer exempt from the responsibilities of citizenship indicate that he cannot afford the luxury of intellectual dissatisfaction?
- Other than by opting out or by allegiance to an ideology of rapid or violent change, how does a student attack his condition of powerlessness?
- How can the professor in the intellectual mode serve as a desirable role model for a student who must deal with the frustrations of social determinism?
- Of what appeal to a student is the celebration of freedom and a passionate moralism when he is a transient apprentice without power or prospect unless he "sells out"?
- Can a student try behavior modes without permanent commitment when he is not insulated from his nurturing society?

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Niebuhr: Irony — Perfect - no doubt.
Kant + Hegel - gnat -
Jung - killer/what he reads

Interior or effective sense -
Perfect
attitude of student to work libraries ---
Vs responsible conduct - Liberty -
mature responsible
un perf duty - grow out -
bad trouble
one perf repressed -

Professionalism

True + Relevant Version
of Man in our Times - with & experience.

Own version to students -
What makes the greatness of man

Not - rebel - radical
encumbers authority for down the road
used when useful - obeys better
& more often -

Not conformist - surface - allegations -
living as befits human nature -
surface -

responsible - committed
└ met duties └ dedicated
— opposite of words - today
not profound or contemporary -

challenge - meet challenge -
not shamed - so I am challenged.
weakness not strength - what therefore
is man -

Greatness - when to rebel - when to conform -
Greatness lies in self - in her freedom.
not cruel, academic freedom of cons.
Radical Freedom - man truly a man -
who can completely be person of himself
want to be - wants to be - making the
thing - reality making himself - man
chooses himself - he is his freedom -
Drowning vision

Impact Thing on a campus - help to grow in inner freedom
make their lives - Christian student

Witness freedom - spirit of Lord -